

TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Matt Fulton, City Manager
Jim Hartshorn, Comm. Dev. Dir.
FROM: Ben Boike, Assistant Comm. Dev. Dir.
DATE: August 8, 2016
SUBJECT: River to River Robert St. Crossing Study



City of West St. Paul

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Representatives from Dakota County as well as the Consultant working on the study, Karl Weissenborn from SEH, will be in attendance to discuss findings and recommendations to date. In April of 2016, the County Board initiated the study with the following scope:

- Develop overall needs assessment for a grade separated crossing
- Review at-grade crossing as the regional trail crossing
- Develop two alternative grade separated underpass alignments with cost estimates
- Assess land use/fiscal tax impacts to the City of West St. Paul
- Obtain public input
- Determine role of Dakota County and City of West St. Paul in possible implementation

Study Findings to Date

The following information was provided by Dakota County. The findings to date along with graphic representation of the crossing options will be discussed and presented at the meeting.

The preliminary findings of the study identify Robert Street as a major barrier to people using the River to River Greenway. Its 4-lane design and heavy traffic levels (21,000 ADT) are a significant deterrent to many visitors, especially seniors and young children. An estimated 140,000 greenway users are projected to cross Robert Street at this location. The study identifies that the grade separated alternatives offer advantages over the at-grade crossing because they provide 1) a safer crossing option, 2) improve user experience consistent with the County's greenway vision, and 3) reduce delay to drivers on Robert Street.

Two grade separated options were evaluated. Both alternatives show the greenway being constructed in a 60' corridor to minimize impacts to surrounding land use. Alternative G can be accomplished using existing City owned property and right of way but would require the closing of Crawford Street. Alternative H would require the purchase of private property on the east side of Robert Street but allows Crawford Street to remain open.

Utilities were evaluated to determine whether they would need to be moved for an underpass project. Storm sewer, sanitary sewer, and a water main would need to be relocated, but the moves could be accomplished in a narrow corridor, minimizing impacts to the newly reconstructed Robert Street. A fiscal impact analysis was prepared to determine the potential loss of annual tax revenue to the City of West St. Paul in the area where the greenway is located. The annual loss of tax revenue is estimated to be less than \$7,000 at this location.

Next Steps

The next phase of the study will involve a public open house and meetings with landowners directly impacted by the project. Following the public input phase, a draft study will be prepared and presented to the Dakota Board and West St. Paul City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The County anticipates having cost estimates available at the meeting. Depending on the cost, the County is hopeful that the City can remain cost neutral with only providing the \$2M in approved bonding dollars.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss and provide comment to the County representatives and Consultant.